

My name is Aparajita Kaphle and I am a member of Connecticut Students For A Dream. I am writing this testimony in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status. The importance of this bill cannot be understated and I hope to see the members of the Connecticut legislature affirm their support and dedication to the people of Connecticut in passing this landmark bill and expanding healthcare of undocumented youths.’

According to the American Immigration Council, “Undocumented immigrants in Connecticut paid an estimated \$335.4 million in federal taxes and \$197.4 million in state and local taxes in 2018.” However, despite 113,000 undocumented immigrants living in the state of Connecticut, almost 60% of this population lacks adequate access to health insurance and health care. This level of inequity is unacceptable. Healthcare and access to health coverage have been linked to increased educational outcomes, economic sustainability, and social mobility. When immigrants do not have to worry about their physical health, they are able to devote more time to education, spending time with their families, and engaging extensively with their communities and Connecticut as a whole.ⁱ

This legislation not only has large-scale benefits for the community as a whole with stories of the ones you’ve heard and will hear today expressing how necessary it was to receive healthcare but also has strong economic benefits that would largely support Connecticut. According to an analysis conducted by the RAND Corporation, expanding Medicaid to undocumented immigrants could deliver “Savings to hospitals from reduced spending on uncompensated care [amounting] to roughly \$63 million to \$72 million benefits. Furthermore, the costs that go into running the current emergency Medicaid program that Connecticut has that offers emergency care to individuals would be “substantially reduced by the decrease in uninsured among undocumented and legally present recent immigrants”.

There are countless stories of students missing class because they were sick and unable to get medical support, stories of parents who are unable to take time off of work when they fall ill because the costs are simply too high, and stories of prevention that never came to fruition. These should be significant signs that Connecticut must adapt and change to meet the needs of its people. As of December 2022, eight states have passed legislation expanding healthcare to undocumented immigrant children. Connecticut must join in.

Healthcare necessity does not stop at 13 years old and I urge the members of the Connecticut general assembly to recognize that in supporting and aiding in the passage of this legislation, you are not only expanding healthcare but education, economic growth, and the diversity that makes Connecticut the state that it is today.